

Department of Developmental Services – Voluntary Services Program Fact Sheet

Vision for Children

All children and adolescents with mental retardation grow up with the love and nurturing of their families. Families identify and receive the individually designed supports they need to raise their children in their family home within their local communities. Communities embrace children with mental retardation and their families and include them in all aspects of community life.

What is the Voluntary Services Program within the Department of Developmental Services?

The Voluntary Service Program (VSP) is primarily an in-home program designed to support children and their with behavioral or mental health needs in their family home. The program is designed so that the family can learn the skills necessary to decrease the child's challenging behaviors while replacing them with positive behaviors and functional skill development. Family's must apply for service and be accepted into the program prior to the child's 18th birthday.

Eligibility Restrictions

If your child is under the age of 8 years old and/or has not yet been re-determined eligible for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) then he/she may be eligible to receive Voluntary Services through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Please ask your staff within the Region for information about DCF voluntary services and to find out the status of your child's DDS eligibility. Children will not be accepted if there is a pending investigation by DCF or if the parent/guardian is the subject of a pending petition alleging neglect, abuse or uncared for or the child requires protective services. Cases that are pending juvenile/criminal justice proceedings will be discussed with DCF before eligibility is determined. VSP services and supports will be discontinued if at any time the child requires on going protective services through the Department of Children and Families. The disposition of juvenile/criminal justice proceedings involving the child may also be cause for termination of VSP supports.

How do I apply for the voluntary services program?

To apply for VSP call the IFS Help Line within your Region -- North Region Help Line - 1-877-437-4577 ; South Region Help Line - 1-877-437-4567 ; West Region Help Line - 1-877-491-2720. Or - If you have a DDS Case Manager speak with them. Inform them that you are requesting DDS-Voluntary Services. You will be sent paperwork to be completed and returned to DDS. A Regional Case Manager, or your Case Manager will be available to help you to complete the application and compiling the other supporting documentation needed.

It is understood that for the purposes of processing the application and program and treatment planning, DDS will receive any DCF investigation summaries that have been completed by DCF. These investigation summaries (records) may be provided by the Department of Children and Families to the Department of Developmental Services without the consent of such parent or guardian.

What supports and services can I expect from VSP?

Supports and services that are delivered through Voluntary Services are those offered under the DDS Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver. Services can be provided through an approved provider or through an individual you hire, except for a few specific services. Please note that **one adult family caregiver is required to be actively involved while services are taking place for at least 50% of the hours of approved Voluntary Services.**

Below are a list of some of the services most often accessed by those who use the Voluntary Service Program:

Behavior Management Services: Development of behavior programs, behavior program monitoring, and training in behavior program implementation for family and support providers. ** Everyone's individual plan and budget must include this service.*

Personal Support: Assistance necessary to meet the individual's day-to-day activity and daily living needs and to reasonably assure adequate support at home and in the community to achieve personal outcomes. This service MAY NOT be used in place of eligible Medicaid State Plan Home Health Care services, such as home health aide support.

Individual Home Support: Assistance with the acquisition, improvement and/or retention of skills and provision of supports to achieve personal outcomes that enhance an individual's ability to live in their community as specified in the individual plan.

Respite: Scheduled breaks for the caregiver while allowing individuals receiving the respite to have an enjoyable time and participate in a variety of leisure activities. The family is provided relief from their ongoing caregiver responsibilities.

Services and supports are built around your family's natural routine focusing on those times that you find most difficult. Some examples are: getting a child up and ready for school, activities of daily living, taking the child out into the community (like grocery shopping or visiting relatives), and/or transitioning from school to home.

How are services and supports determined?

VSP supports and services are offered based on the Level of Need (LON) tool. This program is not an entitlement program and supports and services are delivered at an appropriate level within the appropriations of the Department.

The Department will offer appropriate services to eligible applicants that are reasonably expected to increase positive behaviors and support the family in maintaining the family home. These services are offered through a team approach with input from the family, private provider(s), and case manager. **One adult family caregiver is required to be actively involved while services are taking place for at least 50% of the hours of approved Voluntary Services.**

I understand that my participation in programming and treatment, and my child's progress will be evaluated on at least an annual basis, but more often as necessary, for the appropriateness of continued participation.

What if I disagree with the supports and services offered?

Sometimes DDS makes decisions with which families do not agree. If that should happen to your family, your first recourse is to discuss the matter with your case manager and designated regional managers in the DDS Region in which your family member lives. If you are unable to resolve the matter informally, you have the right to ask for a Programmatic Administrative Review (PAR). If you need more information about the PAR process please contact your case manager.

If you are in disagreement with a decision made by the Children's Services Committee regarding placing your child out of the home you have the right to have your request reviewed by the Commissioner. After review, the Commissioner may require reconsideration by the Children's Services Committee for any denial of services in an out-of-home placement/treatment.

Other important information

The DDS VSP is separate from, and does not supplant, the DDS Waiting List Initiative, dedicated funding and programs for school graduates, and other programs and services of DDS.

The Connecticut General Statutes Section 4-66d requires the Department of Developmental Services to notify individuals who receive care or support that they or their legally liable relative may be liable for reimbursement of any amount paid by the state for the person's care and support. A legally liable relative is the parent of a person under the age of 18, or a spouse of an adult served by DDS. Parents may be liable for a portion of the cost of care for their children under age 18 receiving services from DDS. Connecticut General Statute §4a-12 sets out the method to determine this reimbursement. Liability is determined by subtracting the state median income adjusted for family size from the federal taxable income. The liability can be no more than 12% of the remainder. If a child is enrolled in the waiver, room and board costs are the family's only liability. Families do bear a potential financial responsibility when an individual is not or can not be enrolled in waiver and is receiving services and supports which are paid for through state funds. Generally, DDS will not impose any liability for cost of care for in-home supports under the VSP program.